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Winter 2003

Montana State Historical Records Advisory Board

# The Montana Archivist

Winter 2003

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## SHRAB RECEIVES ADMINISTRATION GRANT FROM NHPRC

The Montana State Historical Records Advisory Board was informed on January 6 that it had received a grant of $9,320 for administrative and outreach activities from the National Historical Publication and Records Commission. The grant began on January 1, 2003 and will continue through the year.

Money from the grant will be used to print and distribute all 2003 issues of *The Montana Archivist*, print a pamphlet on records management and preservation, revise and print *Preferred Practices for Historical Repositories: A Resource Manual and Self-Assessment Checklist*, reprint the Board's strategic plan, and to offer a workshop. The grant also provides funding to make the newsletter and strategic plan available on our website (http://www.montanahistoricalsociety.org/departments/Library-Archives/shrab.html). In addition, the grant will provide mileage and per-diem for Board members whose institutions cannot pay for their travel.

Board members are excited about receiving this grant and about having financial support to pursue some of the obvious needs of Montana's archival community.

If you have any questions about the grant or are interested in receiving the publications, please contact Molly Miller at (406) 444-7482.

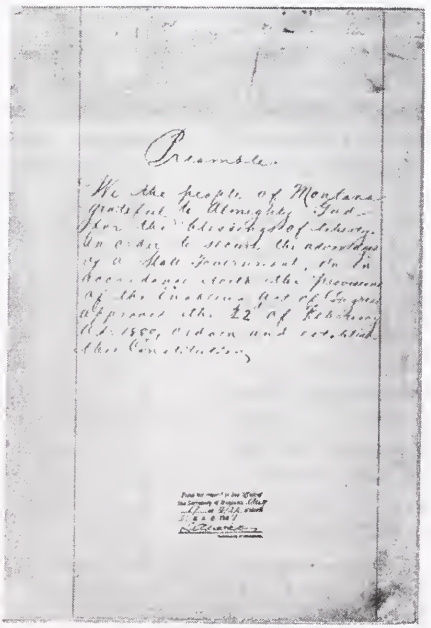
### CONTENTS

| | |
|---|---|
| 2003 Records Bills | 2 |
| Board Resignations | 2 |
| Calendar of Events | 2 |
| Montana Treasures | 3 |
| Western Archives Institute | 3 |

## BLESSINGS OF LIBERTY EXHIBIT FEATURES ARCHIVAL MATERIALS

The Library/Archives program of the Montana Historical Society is pleased to announce the opening of an exhibit celebrating Montana's constitutions. The "Blessings of Liberty" is on display in the west wing of the Capitol building, near the Secretary of State's office.

Before Montana was a state, it was a territory. Even though the territory was taxed during those early years, its citizens had no vote in Congress. To achieve statehood, Montana Territorial citizens needed to prepare and accept a constitution of which Congress approved. This important document contained the basic laws of the state, the duties of its elected officials, and the rights of the people governed. Montanans prepared constitutions in 1866, 1884, 1889, and 1972.



*Preamble of the 1889 Constitution. MHS Archives*

In 1866 the Territory was too young to stand much hope of achieving statehood. Nevertheless, Acting Governor Thomas Francis Meagher called a constitutional convention. Delegates prepared a document, but it was lost on the way to the printers in St. Louis.

In 1883 the Territorial legislative assembly called for a constitutional convention in Helena, but, the 1884 document stood little chance in Congress. A political stalemate prohibited any admission of states *(Cont. page 2)*

## BLESSINGS OF LIBERTY *(cont.)*

that could potentially upset the balance of power.

In 1889, however, that impasse changed and Montana's Territorial government called a 1889 constitution reflected the one written five years before. Montana gained admittance to the Union on November 8, 1889.

Citizens approved a fourth Constitutional Convention in 1972. The one hundred elected delegates produced one of the nation's most progressive documents. It passed a vote of the people on June 6, 1972.

From lost documents to constitutions crafted for the purpose of achieving statehood, and eventually to a model instrument emulated by others, these constitutions are historical treasures—documents that preserve "The Blessings of Liberty."

Prior to 1979, Montana's Constitutions could be found in a metal file drawer located in the Secretary of State's office. In this busy, working environment the constitutions suffered from handling, temperature and humidity fluctuations, and strong light from overhead fixtures. They were transferred to the Archives at the Montana Historical Society in 1980 after being conserved. It is here that they are stored in an environmentally controlled facility and made available for research.

## SHRAB MEMBERS RESIGN

Two members of the SHRAB recently announced their resignations from the Board. Anne L. Foster, former Director of the Huntley Museum of Irrigated Agriculture, was appointed last year. She announced her resignation in late October, saying she had accepted a position with the University of Alaska archives, beginning in late December 2002.

Kim Allen Scott, a long-time member of the Board and University Archivist at Montana State University-Bozeman, announced his resignation in January of this year, due to personal and professional obligations.

The Board would like to thank both Anne Foster and Kim Allen Scott for their dedicated and professional service to the Board.

Anyone interested in serving on the SHRAB should contact Molly Miller at (406) 444-7482 for consideration. Potential members should have experience with or knowledge about archival practices and theories.

## 3 RECORDS-RELATED BILLS HEARD BEFORE THE STATE LEGISLATURE

Several bills have been introduced in the 2003 Legislature that could potentially affect access to public records and the definition of public records in Montana.

Three bills of particular importance to archivists and records managers are House Bill 167, Senate Bill 49, and Senate Bill 142.

**2003 Records Bills**

**HB167:** Redefine public records law

**SB49:** Revise military discharge records

**SB 142:** Clarify relationship of public documents

**Senate Bill 49** seeks to prohibit the disclosure of military discharge certificates to unauthorized individuals. This bill initially sought to limit access to the records solely to the person who filed it with the county clerk and to have the record destroyed at that person's request. Early amendments made during the first hearing of the bill will retain some restrictions to access, but will allow access to family members, next of kin, and appropriate veterans' service organizations. The amendments also removed the option to destroy the records. SB49 was heard by the Senate Judiciary Committee on January 10 and passed by that committee on the 13th.

**Senate Bill 142** seeks to clarify that publicly held information may be withheld from disclosure if the release is preempted by federal law, if the information is critical infrastructure information, or if the release would threaten public safety or the safety of an elected public officer or a public employee who has attempted to protect the privacy of personal information *(Cont. page 3)*

### UPCOMING EVENTS

| | |
|---|---|
| Feb. 12 | Opening: Documenting the Corps of Discovery exhibit, Montana Historical Society, Helena |
| Apr. 9-12 | Northwest Archivists Conference, Sacramento, CA |
| Apr. 24-26 | Museums Association of Montana Conference, Red Lodge |
| Jun. 15-27 | Western Archives Institute, San Francisco, CA |
| Jul. 21-Aug. 1 | Western Archives Institute for Native American and Tribal Archivists, Redlands, CA |

## ARCHIVES INSTITUTE TO BE HELD FOR NATIVE AMERICAN/TRIBAL ARCHIVISTS

The Western Archives Institute will hold an Institute for Native American and Tribal Archivists at the University of Redlands in Redlands, California, July 21-August 1, 2003. The intensive, two-week program will address specific concerns relating to the preservation of Native American and Tribal records. The program will provide integrated instruction in basic archival practices to individuals with a variety of goals, including those whose jobs require a fundamental understanding of archival skills, but have little or no previous archives education, those who have expanding responsibility for Native American archival materials, or anticipate working with tribal records within one year, or those who are working Native American and tribal archivists, but have not received formal instruction.

The Faculty Coordinator will be Tim Ericson, Assistant Library Director for Archives and Special Collections at the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee. He is University Archivist and directs operation of the Milwaukee-region Area Research Center, a statewide network of regional archives. He works with community and regional historical records repositories and has worked as a consultant for tribal archives projects. He also teaches archives administration courses in the university's graduate archival education program.

The program will feature a diverse curriculum, that includes developing and managing archival programs and institutions, administering personal and family collections, records management, appraisal, arrangement, description, legal issues for tribal archives, care of photographs, preservation administration, reference and access, oral history, outreach programs, and grant funding.

Admission is by application only and enrollment is limited. The application deadline for the Institute for Native American and Tribal Archivists is April 15, 2003. For additional information and application form, contact Administrator, Western Archives Institute 1020 O Street; Sacramento, CA 95814, (916)653-7715, ArchivesWeb@ss.ca.gov. The application will be available online on the websites for the Society of California Archivists at www.calarchivists.org and the California State Archives at www.ss.ca.gov/archives/archives.htm.

## BILLS *(cont.)*

in the employee's individual capacity. This bill, which was introduced by the State Department of Administration, builds on homeland security issues and seeks to remove documents with critical infrastructure information from public requests. Critical infrastructure information includes information on dams, power plants, computer systems, and bridges. This bill was heard by the Senate State Administration Committee on January 17.

**House Bill 167**, which was introducted by request of the Secretary of State's Office and in conjunction with the State Records Committee, will generally revise public records management laws. The revisions include making duplicate copies of documents non-records, expanding the definition of non-record material, and allowing state agencies to store records in locations other than the State Records Center Records produced by local government agencies are also addressed in this bill, particularly the expansion of the definition of non-record materials. This bill was heard by the House State Administration Committee on January 16 and was passed by that committee on the 20th.

For additional information on bills introduced in the 2003 Legislature, you can visit the Montana Legislative Services Webpage at http://leg.state.mt.us. For information on records-related bills, contact Molly Miller at the Montana Historical Society at 444-7482 or any member of the SHRAB.

## TREASURE STATE TREASURES SURVEY

What do you hold most dear from Montana's past? The Montana Historical Society wants to know. In conjunction with an upcoming exhibit, titled *Treasure State Treasures,* the Society is conducting an informal survey to determine which of the state's numerous historic treasures hold the most meaning for twenty-first-century Montanans. We hope to hear from you as part of this process.

While the *Treasures* exhibit at the Society will feature prized artifacts held by "Montana's Museum," there are numerous other historic treasures located all across the state. Whether housed in a museum or situated elsewhere beneath the Big Sky, these objects and places serve as our

*(Cont. page 4)*

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## MONTANA TREASURES *(Cont.)*

most direct link to the past and the history that makes Montana what it is today.

Historic treasures come in many shapes and sizes and survey participants are encouraged to think broadly about what makes them feel connected to the past. Responses should, however, focus on subjects that are [1] tangible items or places (rather than historical figures or abstract themes); and [2] still in existence. Categories are not limited but could include: **Artifacts** – once-common items whose importance lies in the fact that they were part and parcel of a way of life that has long since passed; or, conversely, objects whose significance lies in their exceptional uniqueness.

**Art** – historic paintings, sculptures, and photographs that capture the spirit of an earlier Montana but still speak to the citizens of today.

**Documents** – ranging from public documents—like the Montana constitution—that serve as keystones of our society, to family mementos including diaries and letters passed down from earlier generations.

**Buildings** – including both specific buildings noted for their beauty or architectural significance, to general types of structures—like railroad depots or grain elevators—that document important historic themes.

**Historic and pre-historic sites** – the places associated with the people and events that formed Montana history.

To participate in the survey, compile a list—ranked in order—of your top five *Treasure State Treasures* and return it as described below. We also hope that you will add a sentence or two explaining why you feel your choices are so significant. Responses are **due by June 1, 2003**. The results will be discussed this fall at the annual Montana History Conference and in *Montana The Magazine of Western History*.

To return your response, visit the MHS website at www.montanahistoricalsociety.org, send an e-mail to klambert@state.mt.us, or send a letter to "Treasure State Treasures," c/o Montana's Museum, P. O. Box 201201, Helena, MT 59620-1201. For more information call 406-444-4710.